



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/624,866	07/22/2003	Patrick J. Fitzgibbons	L0562.70046US00	7654

7590 04/29/2005

Randy J. Pritzker
Wolf, Greenfield & Sacks, P.C.
600 Atlantic Avenue
Boston, MA 02210

EXAMINER

MILLER, JONATHAN R

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
----------	--------------

3653

DATE MAILED: 04/29/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/624,866

Applicant(s)

FITZGIBBONS ET AL.

Examiner

Jonathan R. Miller

Art Unit

3653

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-15 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-15 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on ____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date ____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date ____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: ____.

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

2. Claims 1 –15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Hendrickson et al. The reference discloses a method for sorting a plurality of items, to each of which a sequence number is assigned, into a predetermined sorted sequence using a plurality of sorting regions, including for each sort, at least one initial sorting region, and at least two additional sorting regions, at least one of the additional sorting regions functioning as a return region, the items being initially located in the at least one initial sorting region, the method comprising the acts of: sorting the items in each at least one initial sorting region into an intermediary sorted set by moving at least some of the items in the at least one initial sorting region between the at least one initial sorting region and at least two of the additional sorting regions; and sorting the items within each intermediary sorted set by moving at least some of the items to the return region in substantially the predetermined sorted sequence (Figs. 19A – 19L; col. 14, lines 4+).
3. With regards to claim 2, the reference further discloses using a computer to track the location of each of the plurality of items (col. 14, lines 4+).

Art Unit: 3653

4. With regards to claim 3, the reference further discloses the items are sorted in a single pass (col. 14, lines 4+).
5. With regards to claim 4, the reference further discloses conveying items from at least one of the return regions serially and in the predetermined sorted sequence (col. 14, lines 36+).
6. With regards to claim 5, the reference further discloses placing an identifier with each of the plurality of items (col. 13, lines 16+; col. 14, lines 4+).
7. With regards to claim 6, the reference further discloses checking the identifier to ensure that the order of the items substantially matches the predetermined sorted sequence (col. 14, lines 44+; col. 15, lines 10+).
8. With regards to claim 7, the reference further discloses the items are positioned linearly in the sorting regions (Figs. 19A – 19L).
9. With regards to claim 8, the reference further discloses a computer is used to control the movement and positioning of the items according to a predetermined algorithm (col. 14, lines 4+).
10. With regards to claim 9, the reference further discloses an apparatus for sorting a plurality of items comprising: a plurality of sorting regions; a first mechanism for physically moving at least one item between at least two selected sorting regions; a second mechanism for physically moving at least one item between positions within each sorting region; an item location tracking mechanism; and a controls operative for controlling the first and second mechanisms to move the items into a predetermined sorted sequence at least partly in response to the tracking mechanism (Figs. 19A – 19L; col. 14, lines 4+).

Art Unit: 3653

11. With regards to claim 10, the reference further discloses at least some of the sorting regions are located one under another and wherein the first mechanism includes an elevator (col. 7, lines 39+; col. 8, lines 18+).

12. With regards to claim 11, the reference further discloses the second mechanism is a conveyor (col. 7, lines 25+).

13. With regards to claim 12, the reference further discloses the controls include a processor running a subroutine for issuing instructions according to a selected item sorting algorithm (col. 10, lines 11+).

14. With regards to claim 13, the reference further discloses the items are postal bins (40-1, 40-2).

15. With regards to claim 14, the reference further discloses the plurality of sorting regions comprise for each sorting at least one initial region in which items are initially located, at least one return region in which items are located after completion of sorting and at least one additional region used in the sorting (Figs. 19A – 19L).

16. With regards to claim 15, the reference further discloses an apparatus for using a plurality of sorting regions to sort a plurality of items comprising: means for physically moving at least one item between at least two selected sorting regions; means for physically moving at least one item between positions within each sorting region; means for tracking the location of items; and means operative at least partly in response the tracking mechanism for controlling the first and second mechanisms to reposition items into a predetermined sorted sequence (Figs. 19A – 19L; col. 14, lines 4+).

Art Unit: 3653

Conclusion

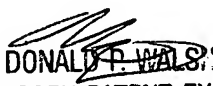
17. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jonathan R. Miller whose telephone number is (571) 272-6940. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F: 8:30AM-5:00PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Donald P. Walsh can be reached on (571) 272-6944. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

jrm


DONALD P. WALSH
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3600